1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
FF38 Katab FF38

Associated apparently with the private ancestral cult is the public cult of the *obwai* or tutelary genius (Hausa *dodo*), how seems to represent generally the plurality of ancestral spirits and particularly the spirit of the ancestor of the clan or kindred. The people have no clear ideas on the subject, which is not surprising, as the *obwai* cult was found in many instances to have been an importation from neighbouring tribes or to have been derived from the Aku clan, whose *obwai* take precedence of all the others. It is noticeable that the *obwai* hut is the only round hut in the village. It can accommodate thirty or forty people, and is provided with mud benches. It is often surmounted with a piece of pottery resembling a crown. The doorway is protected by a curtain of palm fronds, and no initiate may enter the hut at any time other than on the occasion of a festival. The cult is in the hands of the *Agwam obwai*, and plays a considerable part in the social and religious life of the people. It partakes of the nature of a secret society and is used largely as a means of discipline for women and children. The *obwai* is not seen, but his voice is heard, and every two years his representative appears publicly in his costume of grass, dancing round and striking with his cane anyone he comes across. (It is said that he will strike a woman who is going to bear a male child, but will not touch a woman who is going to bear a female.)

As a social factor the *obwai* is not unimportant. If a theft is committed in the village the shrill voice of the *obwai* is heard, and he has to be provided with beer in order that the sin may be purged. The *obwai* may at night be heard striking the wall of a house where an ill-natured wife has been giving trouble to her husband, warning her to desist. I was informed by an *Agwam obwai* that the representations to him of a mere bully of a husband would not be received; he would be told he was a liar and sent about his business. Nevertheless, it is obvious that, as the cult is in the hands of men, and the *Agwam obwai* receives a benefit when his services are required, the cult must be used more in the interests of the male than of the female sex.

Among the neighbouring Kaje tribe every two to three years the *obwai* compels every woman to wear (from July until the *obwai* festival in February) a string necklace as a guarantee that she will not abandon her husband during that period, i.e. the Kaje seek by religious means to put some check on the social evil of excessive sub-marriages. She is required to wear this necklace

2: Gunn E-4 (no date) 1956 FF38 Katab FF38
Kaje

Life Cycle

844 *Birth*

According to Temple, a new-born child and its mother are bathed in cold water. On the fourth day, the child is taken outside its mother's hut for the first time, and is named in the presence of the women of the compound; by the father if a boy, the mother if a girl. Elders assemble for the naming of twins, which is delayed until seven days after birth, and is the occasion of a ritual feast.[115]

Initiation

852 794 It has already been indicated that *obwai* (*abwai*) obtains among Kaje: in general initiation into the cult follows the pattern of Katab proper, but Reynolds' exhaustive account of Kaje practices (of which only a brief summary can be given here) reveals details which may clarify certain obscurities in the Katab record.

According to Reynolds it is believed that Suryan (Baimbin tribal section) introduced the *dodo* (*abwai*) into the area, and it has spread to much of the tribe, essentially along the lines of lineage structure. Generally, each minor lineage has [346] a *dodo* hut,[116] but this is dependent on the size of the group and relations between lineages; some may share the same hut. The lineage which first obtained the *dodo* is recognized as the senior group in cult matters of the area, and its *gado abwai* (Magajin dodo) is recognized as senior and may or may not perform the functions of *gado kapiyi* or *atiyinhwap*. Each *dodo* hut has its own *gado abwai*, [793] the post normally passing from father to brother or to eldest son, with three helpers, all with Hausa titles, selected by the *gado abwai*.

The *abwai* is regarded as an invisible spirit, identified by initiates with the [534] wind instrument which provides its "voice."[117] Other disembodied spirit-voices are also associated with the cult; *dodone* associated primarily not with initiation but with memorial rites for a deceased *gado abwai* will be described below.

Reynolds states that there are no special times for entering the cult, provided the "entrance fee"—said to be a number of fowls, a quantity of beer and a goat—is paid. Youths of the group who are old enough will normally enter at the same time, after harvest and before the first sowing. All who enter at the same time are of the same seniority and earlier entrants are, progressively, senior to them.

Initiation begins when the boys are assembled at night in the compound of the *gado abwai*, in a common sleeping hut, where they are told stories of the *abwai* to frighten them and its voice is heard outside. At dawn, when the voice of Riyam (the wife of *abwai*) is heard, they are taken by sponsors into the *dodo* hut. They are beaten, then *gado abwai* and older members gather in the hut; women and children remain outside at a safe distance.

The boys are shown the instrument which produces the voice of *abwai*, and are beaten to prompt them to reveal any knowledge of it which they may have and to betray their informant. At last they are grudgingly shown how to blow upon it and as each does so he is proclaimed a man. They are then shown a decapitated fowl, and are again beaten, and through skilful interrogation led to say that what they see is the body of a man and his severed head. The head of the fowl and some of its blood are placed in a calabash of beer, which is stirred with a knife. Then each youth, holding the knife in his right hand, takes the oath of secrecy. Finally he drinks the calabash of blood and beer. At the conclusion of the oath-taking Riyam "vomits" the initiated youths, and they are flung bodily out of the hut. They are then taken to the bush and, finally, bathe themselves

[115] Cf. Temple's account of Jaba ritual at birth, below, p. 118.

[116] From Reynolds' description it is round, not like the conventional dwelling hut, with a "piece of pottery covered with spikes" on the peak.

[117] It consists of a pod of *Oncoba spinosa*, with the seeds removed and two holes at either end. A white spider's web (or membranous white disc, under which the eggs are sealed for protection) is placed over one end and warmed until it is taut. Another "voice" is made from a piece of bamboo, 4–6 ins. long.